

one-on-one, he functions like a whetstone—his aim is to make things sharper, and to cut to the heart of an issue or task.

I also appreciate the way Brian interacts with staff. He helps me to hire seasoned professionals, and then he empowers them to do what they do best, giving them confidence that he will be there to back them up when the going gets tough. His authoritative but soft-spoken, even-tempered approach seems to bring out the best in people around him.

Brian's focus is always on the task, not his ego. Washington is to self-promotion what Iowa is to corn and soybeans; but self-promotion is the opposite of Brian's style. He is always quick to spread the credit around, especially if that is what it takes to strengthen the team or seal the deal.

The questions you can always count on Brian to ask are: "How does this help people in Iowa?" and "How does this give a hand up to people who truly need it and deserve it?"

Over the years, Brian Ahlberg has become a consummate Washington player. But he remains a Midwesterner through and through, a passionate progressive like his early mentor Paul Wellstone, with a passion for fairness and justice, a determination to make life better for ordinary working Americans.

Finally, I want to note that Brian has always been wonderfully attentive to my staff members' family needs, doing everything possible to accommodate them in times of sickness, bereavement, or emergency. Certainly, family comes first in Brian's own life. On that score, I realize that Brian's wife Jodi and sons Anders and Lucas have sacrificed because of his long hours at work, and for that I owe them a debt of gratitude.

Brian Ahlberg is my colleague, my confidant, my trusted friend. He is also a wonderful public servant. I will always be grateful to him for the personal sacrifices he has made to help me advance my agenda here in the Senate. Likewise, I will always be grateful to him for his extraordinary service to the people of Iowa and, more broadly, the people of the United States. I wish Brian and his family much happiness and success in the years ahead.

TRIBUTE TO DEREK MILLER

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, as I prepare to relinquish the gavel as chair of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I would like to take a few minutes to express my deep gratitude to our staff director, Derek Miller, for his sterling service in one of the Senate's most demanding staff positions.

Knute Rockne was fond of saying: "I've found that prayers work best when you have big players." Successful committee chairs in the Senate have the same approach. We know that it is not enough to be on the side of the an-

gels; we have got to have big players. Here in the Senate, that means big intellect, work ethic, big heart. Those are qualities that Derek Miller possesses in superabundance.

Derek originally came to work for me in 2003, during my tenure as chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, where he was the lead staffer in our efforts to address the childhood obesity epidemic by improving the nutritional content of foods available in schools. Derek's goal and mine, simply put, was to get junk food out of our schools and to get healthy foods in. Our efforts came to fruition with passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which reformed the school lunch program and established national nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools, including foods sold in vending machines, school snack bars, and à la carte cafeteria lines.

In addition, in the 2008 farm bill, Derek was instrumental in dramatically expanding a program I created in the 2002 farm bill to provide fresh produce free of charge to students in elementary schools that have a high proportion of children from low-income families. Also in that 2008 farm bill, he spearheaded important reforms to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the food stamp program.

In 2010, Derek moved to my personal office as legislative director, where he proved himself to be a gifted parliamentary strategist and where he combined equal measures of humor and commitment to progressive policy to successfully advance my agenda. It is my hope that his weekly email summations of the Senate floor activity live on in posterity.

Early this year I tapped him to lead the staff of the HELP Committee.

The "P" in the HELP Committee abbreviation stands for "pensions." But we also like to think it stands for "people." Traditionally, the HELP Committee has been a powerhouse of progressive legislation—legislation to give people a hand up, provide a ladder of opportunity, and expand access to health care and a secure retirement.

Under Derek's skilled leadership, the committee has been true to that great progressive tradition. He has played a critical role in passing important bipartisan legislation to meet the everyday needs of working Americans. Indeed, amidst a Senate too often mired in partisanship, I thank Derek for helping our committee to chart a very different course—a course of bipartisanship and accomplishment. In this 113th Congress, the HELP Committee has passed a remarkable 23 bills signed into law by the President, distinguishing our Committee as the Senate's most productive.

But beyond legislative accomplishments, I want to pay tribute to Derek's excellence as a manager, as not just staff director but a true staff leader. Derek's colleagues respect that he has

no ego, he has only a job to get done—and that is so rare here on the Hill, where empire-building and self-aggrandizement are all too common.

Derek is respected by staff because his approach is to empower those around him, to support them in every way, but to give them plenty of room to do what they do best.

He sees the professionals on the HELP Committee as people first, and as staffers second. If there is an illness, a pregnancy, or some other challenging circumstance, Derek will move heaven and earth to give the staffer the support he or she needs.

Derek is attentive to his colleagues' family needs because, in his own life, family comes first. Inevitably, Derek's wife Sun and his son Philip have paid a price because of Derek's long hours at work, and for that I owe them a debt of gratitude.

On behalf of my Senate colleagues, and in particular on behalf of members and staff on the HELP Committee, I thank Derek for his dedicated service to the people of the United States. I wish him much happiness and success in the years ahead.

TRIBUTE TO ZACHARY SCHECHTER-STEINBERG

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President. I wish to pay tribute and to extend my thanks to one of my smartest and most passionate staff members Zachary Schechter Steinberg. A native of Iowa City, IA, Zach started with the office as an intern in the summer of 2007. He became an official staff member immediately upon his graduation from Wesleyan University in 2008. Just 6 years later he serves as the Economic Policy Adviser for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and my most trusted advisor on tax, budget and banking issues. Zach is perhaps the strongest and most knowledgeable staff voice in the Senate on effectively preserving Social Security and on the critical importance of maintaining and strengthening the Social Security Disability Insurance program.

Zach has the ability to quickly develop a full understanding of very complicated issues and to work with other staff to forge policy solutions. This is perhaps best illustrated with his work on the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Although newly promoted to legislative assistant, when I was appointed to the conference committee to resolve differences between the House and Senate bills, he advised me on many narrow convoluted issues. He not only performed well, but won the respect of many of the committee's professional staff for his ideas. Zach also understands that passage of provisions into law is but one step, and has remained a stalwart advocate of successful implementation of the bill.

As many of you here in the Senate know last year saw the retirement of Richard Bender, my longest serving